
**State Government & Tribal
Affairs Committee**

HJM 4031

Brief Description: Requesting that Congress and the President demand Ethiopia fulfill its human rights obligations.

Sponsors: Representatives Santos, Pettigrew and Kenney.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Prays to Congress and the President of the United States to demand the Ethiopian government to release all political prisoners and journalists and fulfill its human rights obligations.

Hearing Date: 2/4/08

Staff: Marsha Reilly (786-7135).

Background:

On May 15, 2005, Ethiopia held general elections for seats in both its national and in four regional government councils. The elections and results were observed by the European Union and the Carter Center. While early election reports indicated that opposition parties were sweeping the election, ensuing reports declared the ruling party won the election and retained control of Parliament.

Demonstrations over the election broke out throughout Ethiopia. Government reports indicated there had been more than 60,000 arrests, with 42 deaths. However, according to a 10-member public inquiry commission report, 193 civilians had been killed and 763 were seriously injured during the protests.

Since the 2005 elections, arrests of political dissenters, journalists, human rights defenders, and civic leaders have been reported, as well as widespread announcements of human rights violations.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Summary of Bill:

The Legislature prays that Congress and the President of the United States demand that the Ethiopian government immediately and unconditionally release all political prisoners and journalists and fulfill its obligations under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is resolved that the Washington State Legislature condemns the widespread human rights violations in Ethiopia. It is further resolved that the U.S. Government:

- work to secure the release of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience, monitor prison treatment, and demand disclosure of detained political prisoners and that these prisoners be treated humanely;
- demand that the Ethiopian government not interfere in the exercise of rights to freedom of opinion, expression, and association;
- work with the United Nations to establish an independent international commission of inquiry to investigate human rights abuses in Ethiopia;
- demand resumption of the process of reform and improvement of democratic institutions;
- encourage and support the African Human Rights Commission and its member state to investigate and report on human rights violations;
- demand that the Ethiopian government prosecute those responsible for the 193 deaths of protesters and those injured as a result of the use of deadly force by government security forces;
- demand that the Ethiopian government implement measures to ensure the independence of the judiciary due process;

It is further resolved that Congress adopt a resolution on the human rights situation in Ethiopia and pass "The Ethiopia Freedom, Democracy and Human Rights Act of 2006."

It is further resolved that copies of this Memorial be transmitted to the President and Vice President of the United States, the Senate majority leader, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and each member of Congress from the State of Washington.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.